© 1968 The New York Times Company.
NEW YORK, FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 1968

Hitler Took Cyanide, Soviet Inquiry Found

Result of an Autopsy Is Disclosed in Book Published Today

Soviet investigators' autopsy report is on Page 14.

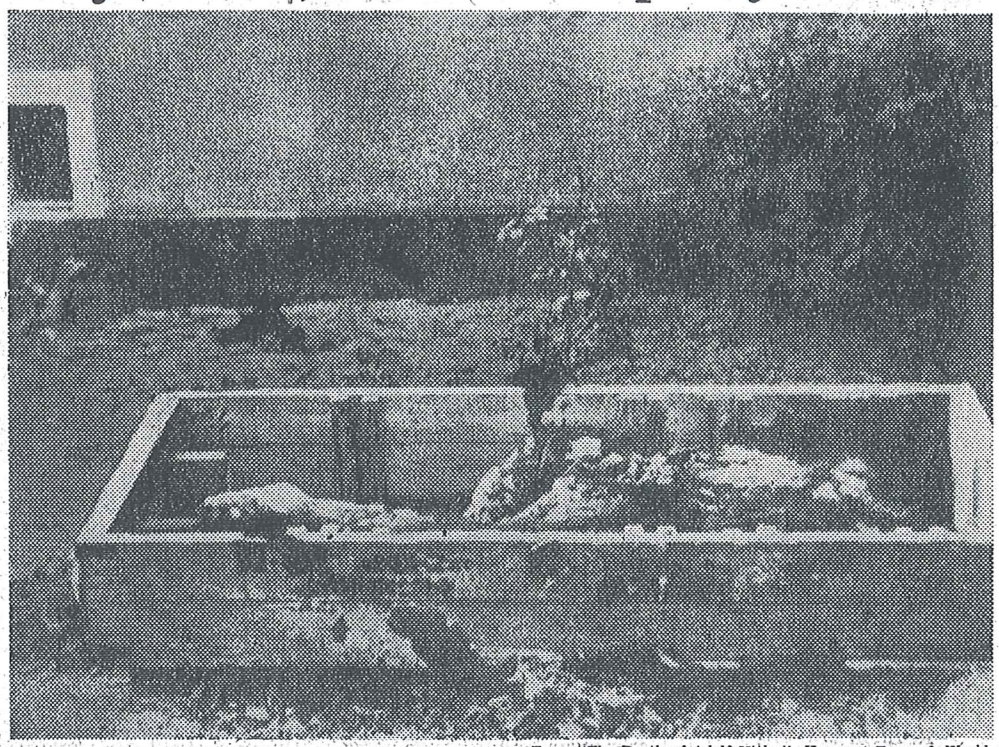
By HARRISON E. SALISBURY

Twenty-three years after the event, Soviet sources have finally disclosed details of the autopsy and other medical reports on the death of Hitler.

An exhaustive Soviet inquiry established positively, according to a book to be published today, that Hitler's death was due to cyanide poisoning. Identification of the body was made through detailed examination of dental evidence.

The Soviet version of Hitler's death contradicts earlier versions, including those of William L. Shirer and H. R. Trevor-Roper. Both historians concluded that Hitler shot himself and that Eva Braun, his mistress, whom he had married the day before, poisoned herself.

The Soviet reports, suppressed completely by Stalin and to an extent by his successors, have been compiled by Lev Aleksandrovich Bezymensky, a former Soviet intelligence officer and translator and historical journalist. They are being published here today, under the title "The Death of Adolf Hitler," by Harcourt, Brace & World, and are being published simultaneously in Europe. The price here is $3.95.



From "The Death of Adolf Hitler"—Harcourt Brace & World

Photo made by a Soviet cameraman purportedly shows charred body of Adolf Hitler

Mr. Bezymensky's account confirms evidence, long known in the West, that Hitler died on April 30, 1945, in his Reichschancellery bunker in Berlin with Eva Braun.

What had not been previously known was that a Soviet counterintelligence team found the bodies believed to be those of Hitler and Eva Braun on May 5 in a shell crater where they had been put in a shallow grave.

The Smersh team was headed by Lieut. Col. Ivan I. Klimenko, chief of counterintelligence with the Soviet 79th Rifle Corps. "Smersh" is a

Continued on Page 14, Column 1

A frame from a roll of film marked "Last Pictures of Hitler," found in the files of Heinrich Hoffmann, the Führer's official photographer, when the Russians entered Berlin.

BODY IDENTIFIED BY DENTAL RECORD

Book to Be Published Today Contradicts Earlier View That He Shot Himself

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

name by which Soviet counterintelligence forces were known colloquially in World War II and is an acronym for the Russian words "smert shpionam," which mean "death to spies."

On Hitler's instruction, according to historians, the two bodies were burned with gasoline in the shell crater.

The bodies, badly charred, were taken from the crater adjacent to the bunker, wrapped in blankets and placed in wooden boxes along with the bodies of two dogs found in the same shell crater. They were transported to the counterintelligence headquarters of the Soviet Third Shock Army at Buch, a northern Berlin suburb, the Bezymensy account says.

A topflight Soviet medical team, headed by Dr. Faust I. Shkaravski, chief of forensic medicine for the Byelorussian Front, was assembled at Berlin-Buch, where the bodies of the Goebbels family and that of Gen. Hans Krebs, Acting Chief of the German Staff, had also been transported. All of the bodies came from the Reichschancellery bunker.

The forensic team performed autopsies on each body, examining those that proved to be Hitler's and Eva Braun's on May 8. The corpse believed to be Hitler's was badly burned. However, the medical examiners recovered fragments of a potassium-cyanide capsule from the mouth. They found no sign of wounds on the corpse but part of the skull was missing. Part of a cyanide capsule was also found in the mouth of the Braun corpse.

The verdict of the Soviet post-mortem was that death in both cases had been caused by cyanide poisoning.

Jaws Well Preserved

The upper and lower jaws of the corpse believed to be Hitler's were well preserved. The jaw bones, teeth and dental work were placed in a box and a team of investigators set out May 9, 1945, to locate Hitler's dentist, a Professor Blaschke. The dentist was not found, but with the aid of his assistant Mrs. Käthe Heusermann, the X-rays of Hitler's dental work and several gold crowns that had been made for him but had not yet been fitted were located in the Blaschke clinic.

These materials were taken to a dental technician named Fritz Echtmann, who had made the bridges and plates. The dental work matched that taken from the corpse believed to be Hitler's.

A similar identification was made of Eva Braun. The dental examination, the Smersh investigators reported, according to Mr. Bezymensky, established the identity of the corpses beyond doubt.

However, Smersh did not halt here. It took detailed depositions from all dental technicians and specialists who had done any work for Hitler.

Witnesses Rounded Up

They rounded up witnesses of the events in the bunker and pieced together a chronological account of Hitler's last days and his suicide. They concluded that the two dogs found in the crater with Hitler and Eva Braun had been killed in tests of the cyanide-capsule's fragments, according to the Bezymensky narrative.

As Smersh reconstructed the scene, Hitler and Eva Braun retired to their quarters in the early hours of April 30 after Hitler had ordered his valet, Heinz Linge, to return after 10 minutes "when everything was quiet."

When Linge re-entered the room, the suicides had occurred. Acting on Hitler's instruction, Linge then carried out what he called "the most difficult order of his life." This, the Soviet investigators deducted, was to deliver a coup de grâce, presumably because of Hitler's fear that the poison might not work.

Mr. Bezymensky leaves unclear Stalin's reason for suppressing the evidence of Hitler's death. All the basic facts, Mr. Bezymensky noted, were fully reported to Stalin before the end of May. The first news of Hitler's suicide had been given to Stalin May 1 when General Krebs appeared at Marshal Vasily I. Chuikov's headquarters and delivered a letter from Goebbels announcing Hitler's death. General Krebs subsequently committed suicide by cyanide poison, according to official Soviet reports.

The letter was passed to

Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov's headquarters where Mr. Bezymensky transalated it for forwarding to Stalin. However, the Soviet authorities were skeptical of the Krebs report.

Although the Smersh investigation established the facts beyond dispute, Stalin did not make the information public. In fact, he spoke cryptically to Prime Minister Churchill and President Truman at the Potsdam Conference in July, 1945, as if he did not know what had happened to Hitler.

Mr. Bezymensky believes that Stalin first kept the evidence secret in order to use it in case of any trick, should someone try to masquerade as Hitler.

Smersh was ordered to check the possibility that Hitler could somehow have escaped from Berlin. It took into custody everyone it could find who had been in the bunker or close to Hitler — his adjutant, Otto Günsche, his pilot, Hans Bauer, and the chief of the bodyguards, Wilhelm Möhnke. They apprehended Linge, and a bodyguard named Harry Mengershausen, who had witnessed the burning of the bodies, and many others.

Held Prisoners for Years

These individuals were interrogated again and again. They were held secretly in prison in the Soviet Union for years. As late as 1951, they were still being questioned by Smersh and were being compelled to sign new detailed declarations about Hitler's last moments.

In the end, Stalin never divulged a word of the evidence. It was locked in the archives along with the charred jawbones, the dental work, the charts, the photographs and possibly even the remains of the corpses.

The full record, even now, has not been published in the Soviet Union although Mr. Bezymensky has written several popular works dealing with the last days of the Third Reich and has included excerpts from some key documents.

So has Yelena Rzhevskaya, another Soviet interpreter, who accompanied the Smersh team that raced about Berlin on May 9 with Hitler's jaws and teeth in a box, searching for dental specialists to complete the examination.

Now, the volume published today presents the full text of the Hitler autopsy, the autopsy of Eva Braun and the Goebbels family, photographs from Soviet archives of the bones, the charred bodies and extensive extracts from the interrogation.

According to an official of Harcourt, Brace & World, Mr. Bezymensky, with the knowledge of the Soviet authorities, sent his manuscript to Christian Vegner Verlag, a major West German publishing house in Hamburg. Vegner Verlag assigned the book and serial publishing rights to publishers in the United States, Britain, France and Italy.